

DEC 09 1999

MR. GOICOECHEA: Pete Goicoechea, chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, Eureka, Nevada. I don't read quite as fast as Bob, so this might be a little slower.

1 I'm here on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners to make some preliminary comments on the Draft EIS. First of all, we'd like to thank you, the DOE, for bringing this hearing to Crescent Valley. We appreciate your willingness to bring it to the vicinity of the impacts in our county, and we hope you continue to do that across the state.

Most of my comments will be somewhat basic, mostly related to transportation issues, and we will submit written comments by February 9th of 2000.

Eureka County is one of the 10 affected units of local government under Section 116 of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act as amended. While the Eureka County Commission hasn't taken a formal position on the Yucca Mountain project, we are still very concerned about the impacts of a rail line through our county will cause. We're especially concerned that this EIS, the documents that is supposed to identify these impacts, truly doesn't.

The EIS makes clear that the DOE intends to make a decision on the mode and the routes for transportation based only on the information in the EIS. Therefore, we believe that the EIS ought to have adequate information for all routes so that an informed decision could be made. The very basics are lacking in this Draft EIS.

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The EIS states that the DOE intends to make the decision on which mode, whether it will be truck, rail, or heavy haul, and the route based on this information. Based on the limited information presented in this document, such a decision could not, would not and could not be an informed one because there is so little information about the routes, the communities they travel through, or even the DOE's concept of operating this rail line.

What's missing in the EIS? Almost everything practical that we need to know about the proposed rail line. Who owns it? Who will operate it? Who will own the track? Who will make the repairs to it?

Will it be fenced? Who will maintain the fencing? We already know what happens up the country here. It's not very well maintained.

How many grade crossings are contemplated? Will there be underpasses, overpasses? How about ranches? We're going to bisect a tremendous number of allotments. How are they going to cross the railroad?

2 And will there be an access road? And again, thanks to Joe, I see it will be and incorporated in the quarter mile right of way.

59 percent of all the assessed parcels in Eureka County are within this 10 mile proposed route. The proposed route is within five miles of the second largest population center in Eureka County. It might be just Crescent Valley, but it is the second largest in Eureka County, and we're proud of it.

The EIS makes little mention of the impacts on these people. It does not adequately address the impacts of the building and the operating of a rail line so near private property. And that does not address the possible stigma effects on property values.

3 Flood plain issues. We're very concerned about the flood plain. We live here. The flood plain information is not complete and does not acknowledge the severe flooding that we have in this vicinity and also along your proposed rail route. The assurances on 6-47 that the operation of the branch line would be stopped during flood conditions and a flooding of the track and would not resume until the DOE has made necessary repairs. What are we going to do with that train load of nuclear waste? Park it? How long and will the flash flood be detected in time to stop a shipment if it was in route?

We could very well have it down here at John Filippini's at Carico Lake.

4 The EIS does not have adequate information about the impacts on grazing. The EIS states that fencing decision rests with the Bureau of Land Management and US Fish and Wildlife. The information on fencing is not definitive and excludes local government, the local community, and most of all, those livestock permittees that will be impacted. They need input.

5 Emergency management and response. The Draft EIS is inadequate in its analysis of local government demands related to public and health and safety. The county will be submitting detailed comments in this area as well, and I understand that's been the policy all along that we're going to wait until we're five years from shipment before we're going to start equipping and training these people. That is completely inadequate.

There does not appear to be an analysis or discussion for the potential activities and cost needed during all the phases of emergency management and the response including preparedness response and recovery times.

6 The EIS is also insufficient because it does not consider the possibility of roads other than interstates when we're talking highway mode, truck mode of transportation to Yucca Mountain. The study done by the Nevada Department of Transportation several years ago indicated that likely routes could be

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6 the A and B routes, both of which run south from Wendover to Ely on the way to Yucca Mountain. If either one of these were ultimately designated into highway transportation, Eureka County could be the host for an alternate routing, either I-80 or Highway 50 across the southern part of the county.

The EIS does not address alternate routing in the event of an accident, construction or weather, and it should.

7 We see the need for baseline health data. In November of 1995, Eureka County submitted scoping comments to the Department of Energy suggesting issues that should be covered in the EIS. One of our themes was the need for baseline health data, along with the method of compensation which would insure that the victims are compensated in a timely manner for their exposure. This was not adequately addressed in the EIS, and again, this was a request we had four years ago.

8 The Humboldt River. The EIS provides very little analysis of the impacts of a release -- for the release of radioactivity into the Humboldt River, which is crossed many times by the existing rail, and also by the interstate if we are talking truck transport. The EIS does not analyze the impacts of nuclear waste transportation over decades on the existing rail and highway infrastructure within Nevada, and we all know what I-80 looks like and the construction we go through there.

9 Military air space impacts. Also absent from the EIS was the adequate analysis of the cumulative impacts and the potential conflicts between the military air space practice areas, the ranges to the south, and the rail route. And we just went through that battle with Fallon NAS.

10 In conclusion, Eureka County believes that the DOE's environmental impact statement is inadequate and incomplete. We believe that the information in the current document is not adequate and should not be used by itself as a decision or a tool for the selection of a mode or route for transportation. The lack of mitigation in the document indicates that DOE does not truly understand the magnitude of the impacts in this area with this major project. The cumulative impact analysis lacks the depth we would like from such a large government project. This is going to span generations.

We expect that the DOE will revise this Draft EIS significantly and address the deficiency and to provide a level of detail needed for us to make an informed decision.

As a County Commissioner, we're charged with protection of our citizens, their health, safety and welfare. Until we have a basis to make a logical decision on these transportation issues and the impacts, I feel you have a very appealable document. Thank you.

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